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GEORGIA PRIMARY EDUCATION PROJECT

**MONTHLY REPORT
APRIL 1 – APRIL 30**

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MONTHLY REPORT

April 1 – April 30, 2012

During this reporting period, G-PriEd staff worked to move forward the creation of the reading and math task forces that will create classroom assessments, supported the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement, continued to improve the training materials for the upcoming pilot, and began designing a plan of action for a working group to be charged with finalizing the training modules and creating supplementary materials.

Below we provide further detail of this month's activities.

Output 1: Reading fluency and comprehension outcomes improved in grades 1-6

During the reporting period, G-PriEd investigated the use of ICT among teachers of Georgian, further elaborated a concept paper on the role of literacy/numeracy professional development leaders, revised the format of its training modules, and provided expert advice and support to the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (NCEQE) in the conduct of their national assessments.

Input 1.1: Reading instruction improved

Create Reading Working Group (Task 1). This month, the project finalized a scope of work for the Reading Diagnostic Assessment Task Force, which will be charged with developing diagnostic assessments for teachers to use in tracking student achievement in reading. G-PriEd reached agreement on this scope of work with the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (NCEQE) and USAID, and released job ads to hire the experts that will take part in the Task Force, including curriculum experts, practicing teachers, a psychologist/education specialist, a psychometrician, a gender specialist, an inclusion specialist, and a statistician. Applicants will be evaluated by a Selection Committee made up of staff from G-PriEd, NCEQE, and USAID. G-PriEd expects the Selection Committee to make final decisions in May.

Facilitate activities of the working group in applying national reading standards and developing assessment tests for each grade between 1 and 6 (Task 2). As mentioned above, G-PriEd expects to constitute the Reading Diagnostic Assessment Task Force in May. Task force members will collaborate to develop the assessment tests for each grade between 1 and 6.

- *Readability standards.* Since readability standards constitute a cornerstone of the diagnostic assessment in reading, G-PriEd staff have designed activities to support the creation of readability standards, and hopes to incorporate these activities into the scope of work for the assessment task force. In addition, in April G-PriEd staff met with Natia Gorgadze, from the Center for Civil Integration and Inter-ethnic Relations (CCIIR), which is supporting educational improvement in bilingual schools through educating teachers in how children learn a second language, developing supplemental reading materials, and developing bilingual curricula. This work is supported by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Both CCIIR and G-PriEd discussed the possibility of

collaborating on a half-day workshop on readability and text leveling, and drew up a preliminary list of topics, participants, and agenda. G-PriEd has developed a comprehensive conceptual document on readability, which we will submit to USAID in early May.

*Facilitate activities of the working group to review current teacher guidelines in reading for Georgian and ethnic minority students (Task 3).*¹ G-PriEd did not undertake activities under this task in April. In May, G-PriEd expects to move these activities forward under the auspices of a Working Group to Improve Reading Outcomes. In May, G-PriEd's Director of Reading Improvement will hold a formal meeting with Natia Natsvlishvili, a coordinator at TPDC, to determine TPDC priorities for revising guidelines and set a time frame for doing so.

Facilitate the development of the paper-based and electronic instructional content (Task 4). In April, G-PriEd staff facilitated a roundtable meeting with Eka Jeladze, coordinator of ICT at the Teacher Professional Development Center (TPDC). Meeting participants included representatives of MES and TPDC, practicing teachers, ICT teacher trainers, and experts of ICT in education. Participants shared information about best practices, brainstormed current needs, and reviewed available resources. Teachers shared information about how they incorporate ICT, including by creating teacher-made supplemental reading texts and practice exercises using Microsoft Word, using lesson organization programs, using test administration tools, chat, delivering e-presentations, etc. (These tools are available through Mythware, which is included in a teacher version of netbooks delivered to first-grade classes.) Teachers are also using the Web to communicate with parents. Some of them have developed classroom blogs onto which they upload reading/writing assignments and ask parents to help children practice reading at home.

Teachers said that the benefits of using e-resources are that students tend to be more engaged, and in addition teachers can share resources easily with each other over the Internet. The challenges are that many classrooms do not have access to the Internet (and some schools do not as well).

In the final session, participants developed lists of existing and desirable e-resources for teaching reading in elementary grades (included below).

Existing e-Resources	Desired e-Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electronic educational games (available at buki.ge, skool.ge, tpdc.ge, kodala.ge) • Electronic lesson plans (available at lemil.ge) • YouTube.com provides access to Georgian cartoons that can be used in teaching reading • Exercises designed by teachers (mainly for their own use but sometimes shared through teacher blogs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-books with short texts and illustrations; adapted texts supplemented with audio-versions • Electronic comic strips to which students can add text • Electronic educational games • Exercises designed by teachers • Student authoring programs aimed at enabling students to write and design their own books

¹ Note: any work with the ethnic minority schools will depend on the needs of the MES.

In addition, in April, G-PriEd awarded a subcontract to a local organization to print newly developed textbooks to teach Georgian as a second language to fifth and sixth graders. The subcontractor will print books and teacher manuals between May and August to be ready for the next school year.

With MES and working group, identify pilot schools through a stratified random selection (at least 270 Georgian and 50 ethnic minority schools) and launch pilot (Task 5). In March, the MES has provided G-PriEd with the names of 318 schools that will serve as its pilot sample. The MES also provided the names of 196 schools that will serve as the control group. To date, the project only has received control group schools for the Georgian-language population and is working with the EMIS Agency to identify control group schools for the minority-language population.

G-PriEd staff is discussing with MES representatives the plan and schedule to notify pilot schools of their selection for the G-PriEd pilot. Once the MES has agreed to the concept paper for literacy/numeracy leaders, they will contact school principals. A meeting with MES representative is planned for the week of May 14, and G-PriEd expects notification of schools to be completed by the end of May.

Pilot teacher training (Task 6). To support school-based professional development, G-PriEd continues to prepare the training modules that will be used to train the national trainers and the literacy/numeracy leaders. G-PriEd expects to engage a working group on reading improvement in revising/finalizing the modules later in May.

- *Create teacher professional development materials in reading.* In April, G-PriEd's Reading Improvement Director presented Module 1 – Teaching Reading in Elementary Grades (one of the three reading modules for the professional development program) to the project COR, who provided several useful suggestions regarding the structure and content of the module. As a result, G-PriEd is re-developing one comprehensive section on the core component of phonics. As suggested by the project COR, the sample:
 - Describes what phonics is and why it is important for elementary school children.
 - Discussed why some children have difficulty learning this component of reading.
 - Suggests how teachers can assess students' competency in this component and monitor students' progress.
 - Describes how teachers can provide explicit instruction in this core competency (i.e., demonstrates diagnostic teaching techniques).
 - Discusses how teachers can apply diagnostic teaching techniques to the subjects and children they teach.
 - Suggests additional strategies for teaching this core competency.
 - Describes how teachers can provide multiple layers of instructional support adapted to the needs of diverse learners.
 - Suggests how teachers can incorporate supplemental reading materials to support diverse learners to achieve competency in this core skill.

- Provides variety of opportunities for participant exploration, observation, and reflection.

G-PriEd will submit the draft of the phonics “cycle” with the above-described elements on May 8 (as well as one for math). Once the structure, format, and content have been finalized, the model will be ready for elaboration and application to other core skill areas (comprehension, word recognition, etc.).

- *Define the role of teachers in the school-based professional development system.* In April, G-PriEd staff met with TPDC staff to present a draft conceptual framework of G-PriEd’s proposed school-based professional development system and receive feedback and recommendations. To address TPDC’s recommendations, G-PriEd revised the following components of the conceptual framework with input from the project staff:

- *Links to the teacher professional development scheme.* G-PriEd added to the concept paper a list of the activities that literacy/numeracy leaders are expected to perform and their correspondence with activities listed in the teacher professional development scheme. This list includes the number of credits and the evidence that literacy/numeracy leaders need to provide to obtain the credits.
- *Selection procedures for the literacy/numeracy leaders.* G-PriEd developed five options for selecting literacy/numeracy leaders. Each option includes proposed selecting bodies and procedures, as well as associated advantages and disadvantages.
- *Incentives for literacy and numeracy leaders.* A list of the monetary and non-monetary incentives for literacy and numeracy leaders has been developed.
- *The role of TPDC and Teacher Houses.* A comprehensive list of the responsibilities of TPDC and Teacher Houses in launching, supporting and sustaining school-based professional development has been developed.

In addition to the revisions mentioned above, the following components of the conceptual framework were revised or developed:

- *Staffing strategies for engaging literacy and numeracy leaders.* Various options for staffing strategies with respective costs were developed for three categories of schools: small, medium, and large.
- *Workload for literacy and numeracy leaders.* Based on the data provided by EMIS, estimates of working hours for literacy and numeracy leaders were generated separately for Georgian and non-Georgian schools for three phases of school-based professional development: Basic Minimum Phase, Basic Extended phase, and Advanced Phase.

In May, G-PriEd plans to involve international consultant Rita Bean in the review and finalization of the conceptual framework on school-based professional development. The revised conceptual framework will be discussed with USAID, the TPDC, and MES representatives in May.

- *Hold focus groups with school principals.* In May, G-PriEd plans to hold focus groups with principals in Tbilisi, Telavi, and Kutaisi to obtain their feedback on the

current conceptual framework for literacy/numeracy leaders. In April, G-PriEd staff did the following to prepare for the focus groups:

- Developed research questions for the focus groups.
- Identified target schools for the focus groups from among those schools selected to be in the project pilot.
- Met with MES representatives to discuss the purpose of the focus groups and submit the list of target schools for MES approval.

Input 1.2: Reading delivery systems improved

Facilitate working group to study the national reading assessment methodology (Task 7). In April, G-PriEd engaged international consultant John Olson to advise NCEQE on the development and implementation of its national assessments (an assessment of Georgian as a second language among first-graders and of Georgian and math among fourth-graders). During his visit, Dr. Olson organized five day-long workshop sessions at NCEQE to advise and train the NCEQE staff on strategies related to test administration, test security, training of test administrators, quality assurance, test scoring, data collection and data cleaning, entry and analysis. At the end of each session, NCEQE staff asked questions regarding how to improve their work on national assessment. Dr. Olson also provided technical reports and other resources (hard and soft copies) to NCEQE staff to serve as guiding resources for NCEQE. The materials included a collection of 15 different documents on assessments and were distributed in CD format (we are happy to provide a copy of this CD to USAID if desired).

In addition, during April, G-PriEd procured assistance for the NCEQE to print the test booklets and questionnaires for their national assessment, and developed and released an RFP to procure test administration services for the NCEQE.

Develop remediation and promotions programs (Task 11). G-PriEd has started to implement an approach to promote reading in school and in the home.

- *Launch reading campaign.* The MES has organized a Working Group on Parent Engagement and G-PriEd has agreed to support its work if it includes strategies to support reading and math. G-PriEd expects the end result of the Working Group to be (among other things) plans for a campaign to engage parents in supporting their children's abilities in reading and math. During April, G-PriEd drafted scopes of work for the individuals it proposes to engage in this work.
- *Discuss promotion strategies.* This work will start in Quarter 3. In June, the Director for Reading Improvement will collect background information on book clubs, reading competitions and other reading promotion practices from Georgia and international settings. This may include identifying effective models currently existing in Georgia, collecting detailed information on the scope of activities such groups use to promote reading, and developing recommendations for scaling up or replication.

Output 2: Math competencies improved in grades 1-6

During the reporting period, G-PriEd staff revised training modules for numeracy leaders, created a list of existing e-resources that could improve math instruction in Georgia's classrooms, integrated ICT suggestions into the training modules, and reviewed professional standards for math teachers to identify gaps, specifically with respect to child development theory and related pedagogy.

Input 2.1: Math instruction improved

Create Math Working Group (Task 1). This month, the project finalized a scope of work for the Math Diagnostic Assessment Task Force, which will be charged with developing diagnostic assessments for teachers to use in tracking student achievement in math. The process of establishing this task force will mirror the one described above for the reading task force.

*Facilitate the activities of the working group to review the teacher guidelines in math for Georgian and ethnic minority schools and support development of guidelines for ethnic minority students (Task 2).*² Earlier, G-PriEd staff reviewed three existing teacher guidelines (two guidelines published by the National Curriculum and General Education Development Department and the third by the TPDC) in light of pedagogy and the child development theory. In April, G-PriEd discussed with TPDC collaborating to develop teacher guidelines to assist elementary math teachers to prepare for the certification exam. In May, G-PriEd expects to move these activities forward under the auspices of a Working Group to Improve Math Outcomes. The Working Group will collaborate with subject area experts at TPDC to develop new guidelines collaboratively in the summer of 2012.

Facilitate the activities of the working group to develop paper-based and electronic instructional content (Task 3). G-PriEd staff are in the process of developing a scope of work for a working group to undertake this work. G-PriEd staff created a list of existing e-resources (including games) that could improve math instruction in Georgia's classrooms. G-PriEd will continue to elaborate this list to include existing resources (available in Georgian), existing resources (available for localization to Georgia), and desired resources, specifically those that can provide tiered support within the classroom.

Pilot new technology-based math methodology for grades 1-6 in 270 Georgian and 50 ethnic minority schools (Task 4). To support school-based professional development, G-PriEd continues to prepare the training modules that will be used to train the national trainers and the literacy/numeracy leaders. G-PriEd expects to engage a working group on math improvement in revising/finalizing the modules later in May.

- *Create teacher professional development materials in math.* In April, G-PriEd staff developed a draft model unit focused on fractions, which includes draft lesson plans and homework assignments for teachers. This model unit will be submitted to the COR in early May along with a comprehensive plan for finalization of the math modules with a working group. Afterwards, the project

² Note: any work with the ethnic minority schools will depend on the needs of the MES.

will engage international experts to review and revise the module per the COR's comments.

- *Define the role of teachers in the school-based professional development system.* See description above under the first component.

Input 2.2: Math delivery systems improved

Review/revise national assessment methodology (part of Task 4). In April, G-PriEd engaged international consultant John Olson to advise NCEQE on the development and implementation of its national assessments (an assessment of Georgian as a second language among first-graders and of Georgian and math among fourth-graders). See description under the first component for further information.

Develop remediation and promotions programs (Task 6). G-PriEd has started to implement an approach to promote math in school and in the home. Working in collaboration with the MES Head of International Relations, G-PriEd developed scopes of work for an international expert in parent engagement.

- *Launch math media campaign.* As discussed above under the first component, G-PriEd expects to support the work of the MES' Working Group on Parent Engagement, which it expects to culminate in (among other things) a campaign to engage parents in supporting their children's abilities in reading and math.
- *Discuss promotion strategies.* This work will start in Quarter 3. In June, the Director for Math Improvement will collect background information on math clubs, math competitions and other practices from Georgia and international settings. The preliminary research will identify the range of exemplary math promotion activities currently operating in Georgia, an examination of the number of elementary school aged children engaged in such programs, and recommended strategies for replication.

Output 3. Teacher training delivery systems strengthened

Input 3.1: Teacher retention policies improved

Advise the MES in creating effective induction and retention programs for teachers (Task 1). In April, G-PriEd staff held a meeting with TPDC's head of the program unit to discuss the mentoring and induction program, and the Teach for Georgia program. TPDC staff described how the programs were designed and implemented, and shared the number of teachers involved in these programs. Based on the information gathered at this meeting, in May, G-PriEd will meet with TPDC to propose a plan of activities to improve induction and retention.

Propose effective mechanisms for developing a professional cadre for rural and mountain schools (Task 2). Teacher recruitment and induction for rural and mountain schools falls under the combined jurisdiction of the MES' General Education Division and the TPDC, with General Education Division taking primary responsibility for staffing in ethnic minority schools and TPDC taking the lead for schools located in remote and mountainous communities. In May, G-PriEd staff plan

to meet with Ana Keadze of the MES' General Education Division for Minority Education and with the Irine Kurdadze, Deputy Minister of Education. G-PriEd also plans to discuss with TPDC holding focus groups with participants from Teach for Georgia to better understand what draws participants to their work in rural and mountain schools.

Input 3.2: In-service training improved

Help establish Teacher Houses, develop clear policies, and effective professional development approaches (Task 3). In June, G-PriEd's Director of Teacher Effectiveness will meet with TPDC staff to their needs with respect to existing and planned Teacher Houses, particularly the role of Teacher Houses in supporting the literacy/numeracy leaders in the regions served by (or to be served by) Teacher Houses. As part of G-PriEd's work developing the concept paper for literacy/numeracy leaders, staff have developed a proposed role for Teacher Houses and G-PriEd staff will discuss this proposal with TPDC staff in May.

Support the Teacher Houses in attracting at least 10 reading and 10 math experts (Task 4). This activity will start in Quarter 4.

Support the Teacher Houses in nurturing at least 10 reading and 10 math experts (Tasks 5). This activity will start in Quarter 4.

Provide series of ToT sessions to at least 50 teacher trainers of reading and math (Task 6). To select additional trainers from outside of Tbilisi to fill the regional trainer slots in underserved regions, the project completed initial screening of applicants. In May, members of the identified Selection Committee will shortlist and interview candidates. The hiring of these supplemental trainers is the first use of a joint G-PriEd-MES selection committee and the hiring process agreed upon between the MES and USAID. This hiring process is intended to model the transparency and focus on candidate skills that characterize effective HR processes.

Input 3.3: Pre-service training improved

Review current education programs of universities (Task 7). This activity will start in Quarter 4.